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TAGS: PREL PGOV IR

SUBJECT: IRAN REGIONAL PRESENCE OFFICE DUBAI: WINDOW ON IRAN - MAY 28, 2009

CLASSIFIED BY: Ramin Asgard, Director, Iran Regional Presence Office, DOS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (S/NF) Trilateral Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan Summit in Tehran: On May 24 the presidents of Afghanistan and Pakistan participated in a trilateral summit hosted by the IRIG intended to, in the words of Iranian Foreign Minister Mottaki, develop mechanisms to find "regional solutions for regional problems." The three presidents issued a 24-point "Tehran Declaration" in which they agree to create a mechanism for regular meetings at either the ministerial or head of state level; cooperate to eliminate terrorism; take "urgent steps" to develop infrastructure connectivity between the three countries; and to create pull factors in Afghanistan to facilitate the voluntary return of Afghans to their homeland; among others. The declaration also establishes a coordination committee of the three Deputy Foreign Ministers to prepare a comprehensive action plan and monitor progress of trilateral coordination. The next summit meeting is scheduled for Islamabad in October 2009.

Comment: This meeting also featured final agreement between Iran and Pakistan to commence construction of the Iran-Pakistan pipeline. This "Peace Pipeline" project was originally to include India, but given India's reluctance press reports are already speculating that China may step in to join the project. In addition, Russia's Gazprom has already voiced interest in investing in the pipeline. With the next Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit scheduled for June in Yekaterinburg, Russia, we can expect such energy security issues to feature prominently, particularly as Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are currently observers and prospective members of the SCO.

¶2. (S/NF) American journalist denied visa as message to USG: An American journalist with a major wire service told us Iranian authorities have denied him a visa to cover the elections. He said IRIG officials told him it was in response to US refusals to issue visas to Iranian reporters and accredit Iranian news outlets. Other journalists working for his news service have received visas, he said, and the Iranians refused him, after allowing him into the country more than two dozen times in the past several years, as a message. He also said that Iranian staff of the news service had reported more intense pressure from Iranian security agents recently. Comment: As we reported in last week's WoI, Iranian officials are eager to get Iranian journalists into the US and believe that denying this, and potentially other visas in the future, might get their message across.

¶3. (S/NF) Soccer as Political Football: The Iranian press has

reported extensively this week on the potential friendly matches between the US and Iranian men's and women's teams. Iranian officials have been quoted agreeing to the matches, although US Soccer officials are more circumspect. Ahmadinejad deputy and Iran sports chief Mohammad Ali-Abadi was quick to endorse the match. According to US Soccer information, there was no serious discussion between the US and Iranian federations, but simply some mutual interest in potential match. Comment: Iranians are passionate about soccer, and we can't help but think that the timing of this announcement with presidential campaigns in full swing is hardly coincidental. Many of our contacts have told us that Ahmadinejad's electoral fortunes are tied to the performance of the national team in its upcoming World Cup qualifiers, and its possible that his campaign is hoping for some political benefit from a soccer-mad public if it can be seen to be improving relations with the US, if nowhere else but the soccer pitch.

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